(d) if so, the details thereof with progress made in respect to part (a) above and estimated expenditure to be incurred with respect to (c);

(e) whether the arrangements will yield earning of huge amount of foreign exchange; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government is in the process of finalising arrangements for opening a cheaper transit trade route to the Central Asian Republics.

To examine the feasibility of a transit route, two study teams from the Ministry of Commerce visited Iran and Central Asian Republics in July 1993 and November 1994 respectively. The teams studied the existing infrastructure including quality and adequacy of rail, road and port facilities, transport linkages with neighbouring countries, customs and other regulatory procedures and warehousing facilities, and the possibility of fully operationalising the transit route in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The teams concluded that the trade route through Iran is viable, economical and faster. Subsequently, at the initiative of the Government, an MOU has been signed between the Government of India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkmenistan on 18.4.1995 to facilitate smooth flow of trade between India and the Central Asian Republics through Iran.

(c) The Ministry is not aware of any such move.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) and (f) Utilisation of the transit route through Iran is likely to improve our trade with Central Asian Republics and may help reduce the freight component on Indian goods.

International Leather Goods Fair 1995

3118. SHRI HIPHEI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India Trade Promotion Organisation has organised International Leather Goods Fair, '95 in recent past at Calcutta;

(b) if so, the details thereof with names of countries which participated in it along with purpose for same;

(c) whether commercial benefits have been derived from this Fair;

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor;

(e) whether no such trade fair has been organised so far in any State Capital of North Eastern Region;

(f) whether Government propose to organise such trade fairs in North Eastern States in future; and

(g) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir. India Trade Promotion Organisation organised International Leather Goods Fair from March, 24—26, 1995 at Netaji Indoor Stadium, Calcutta.

(b) No foreign country participated in this fair as it was an export oriented event. The purpose of this fair was mainly to generate interaction between Indian exhibitors and foreign buyers and/or buying agents to enhance exports from the leather goods sector.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Indian companies which participated in the fair reported that they received orders worth Rs. 1.00 crore on the spot and business under negotiation was worth Rs. 7.00 crores.

(e) No such fair has been organised in any State Capital of North Eastern Region.

(f) and (g) International fairs are being organised in places where proper infrastructure and facilities are available and the concerned industrial sector is concentrated. There is no immediate plan to organise international fairs in North Eastern States. The fair in Calcutta serves the North Eastern States as well.

India's share in Global Trade in Spices

3119. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is the largest producer of spices in the world but its share is 11 per cent. of the value of the total global trade in spices;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the future of spices exports depends on sufficient production of quality spices at competitive prices; and

(d) if so, what steps are under consideration in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) India is the largest producer of spices with an annual production of 20 lakh tonnes. It's share in the world trade in value and quantity terms is 11 per cent. and 39 per cent. respectively. The main reason for low share in value terms is limited production of high high value prices and import of value spices.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) To enhance production and improve quality of spices, a Centrally Sponsored Integrated Programme for Development of Spices is being implemented in the VIII Plan with an outlay of Rs. 125 crores under which, measures such as, production and distribution of quality planting material, area expansion, promotion of plant protection measures, establishment of demonstration plots and distribution of minikits are being undertaken.

Other measures aimed at improving the quality of spices includes:

(i) grant of Spice House Certificate to manufacturer/exporter possessing necessary infrastructure in terms of facilities for cleaning, processing, grading, packaging, warehousing and quality assurance;

(ii) providing financial assistance for setting up quality testing laboratories including monitoring of pesticides residues, and for acquiring ISO 9000 accreditation;

(iii) Monitoring of quality by the Spices Board by testing samples obtained from different producing and marketing centres; and

(iv) imparting training on quality upgradation to growers and exporters.

Claims paid by BCGC

3120. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the nature of claims paid by the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India and the claims given by the Corporation during 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95;

(b) the names of the exporters on whose behalf claims were given during 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 and amount of claims given;